

## Synopsis

Woods! Woods again? Good grief, writers, I guessed you guys wanted to go back to basics somewhat and heaven knows background budgets can be a nightmare, but did you really have to go this far? What's next, is misty going to be freaked out by a bug pokemon?

Well! Guess I'd better get ready for the inevitable mansion around the corner...

But we're jumping the gun here a bit, before all that the twerps stumble upon a sight heretofore unheard of in the woods: DEAD TREES.

Yes, compelling, such a mystery OR THEY COULD HAVE DIED OF NATURAL CAUSES! I've taken a couple of strolls in the woods, more than a couple even, and think I can safely say that if I treated every dead tree as a crime scene I'd still be on my first walk! Though of course this is but the rantings of an old man, please continue, what is the rub?

Ah, THERE's the rub, or in this case, the suck! \*click\* and now this video is flagged not suitable for kids. Try to delete my channel now, Youtube! Wait, no please don't-

Yes, it's ANOTHER brand new pokemon, but that's fine, you get new designs, you want to show them off. This group of Heracross are just hanging out, sucking up the sap from patches in the bark like baby platypus (look it up). Ash is all

"That's the ticket! Ruin the ecosystem AND send another hoard of critters to Professor Oak! He'll be so proud!"

\*cut to Oak\*

"I feel like I should be very annoyed right now, is someone riding a bike indoors?"

But before ash can pull a safari zone he's stopped by a Green man voiced by Dan Green. Yes, I know he isn't coloured green, I mean like he's an environmentalist and LOOK JUST GIVE ME THAT PHRASE OKAY? The gang exchange painfully unnatural dialogue with Woodruff here...

Before he explains that the tree sucking is in fact, painfully natural, saying that

"But what about people who want to catch them?"

“That’s why I stand here every day, to stop people doing that. It’s very boring, but I can’t afford a sign since, you know, can’t earn any money since I’m always standing here. Guessing I’ll die pretty soon...”

Snark aside. Apparently the symbiotic relationship these pokemon have with the trees is threatened by an invasive species. And for once it’s not man!

So Ash is all “wait, aren’t heracross prevolutions of Pinsir?” “Nope! They’re completely seperate despite bearing quite the resemblance. Weird huh? At least it’s not as bad as Luvdisc and Alomomola...”

“What and who?”

“Sorry, too early.”

Then the heracross, threatened by the pinsir, rise up, group together and... rack off.

“You kidding? Have you guys see episode 4?”

“Not a philosophy I personally follow of course but, you know, not smart.”

But there’s an outlier! This poor Heracross stayed behind to protect the remaining butterfree from being harassed, and although I do wonder why both of them don’t just fly away, I get not wanting to have to change YOUR habits for the sake of the people harassing you. Doesn’t explain why it doesn’t use sleep powder but eh, maybe it hasn’t learned that yet. Anyway Unfortunately this brave gesture looks to literally be lost in execution, so ash of course brings out the best possible pokemon against bug-types he owns... Bulbasaur.

\*slap\* With the... You have... Fire... flying... literally best, double strong GAAAAAH-

\*sigh\* with... THAT out of the way, Bulbasaur actually does a decent job of knocking them down and setting them up for ash’s REAL ace-in-the-hole for BUG-TYPE pokemon... Pikachu.

OH SURE, POKEMON COMPANY, \*NOW\* YOU’RE SHY ABOUT CHARIZARD. CAN’T LET IT GET OVERSATURATED, CAN WE? BUT... ANYWAY... Heracross is of course grateful and then this happens.

... Good night everybody! Luckily Bulbasaur knows how to deal with creepers, even ones that did good things in the past,

And then ash is all

“Ash, pikachu scared them off, were we watching the same battle?” “apparently not. So woodruff, how was that for environmentalist action?”

“It was a mere band-aid over the root problem and undone in a matter of days.”

“So... Pretty standard?”

No, apparently pinsir originally had their own to inhabit, but something is driving them over into heracross’s territory. Ugh, it’s gonna be Man, isn’t it? Let me just skip ahead again... Yep it’s Man. So misty has a great funny moment...

And then Ash is all “we just gotta figure out what’s causing this so that poor woodruff can leave and grab a sandwich or something, dang!” “Much obliged, but I can come with you. I suddenly realised that that was stupid.” “hooray!”

So Woodruff leads the way to the location and bulbasaur cuts away a piece of foliage for no reason except to pad time. Boy, that takes me back! Then ash is all

And woodruff’s like “Yes ash, by destroying the foliage you are helping me. Congratulations.” but it turns out there was an actual plot reason for Ash to bring out bulbasaur: so heracross can continue to pester Bulbasaur for it’s nectar. Ugh. But then they come to the bridge across the ravine and Dan Green does what Dan Green does well. \*oh no!”

So it looks like the bridge is out, a situation that has NEVER BEEN ENCOUNTERED OR SOLVED BY THIS GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS WITH THE VERY POKEMON THAT IS CURRENTLY HANGING OUTSIDE OF ITS POKEBALL, and it looks like they’ll have to give up on the whole deal until heracross makes itself useful by pulling a Breath of the wild and abridging the narrative. To bad they can’t abridge the horrendously slow pace of the shots! Good grief, I’ve never been so BORED watching a precarious situation! Where’s the peril?

“When your plot needs peril without the effort, just call on me! Togepi! Embrace me, oblivion!” and once again it looks like heracross’ heroic deeds were really just self-serving. What a hero! Then after Ash is apparently whisked away by candle jack-

FINALLY we get to the Pinsir feeding grounds and Dan Green gives the read of his life.

That’s the emmy line right there. So they reach the main tree and boy, Pinsir’s gigantimax form’s pretty underwhelming. No, of course it’s team rocket, who also sound like they just weren’t feeling it today...

Yeah, so they were really hungry and found the tree and licked it and licked it and... oh geez did they need the sax? Did they really need the saxophone here? I'm gonna get restricted aren't I?

Then they explain that they're planning to suck all the sap from the trees in the area to make their special... their special...

Yeah, that. I want to be family friendly guy, really I do. I love showing that you don't necessarily have to be crude or offensive to get a laugh, though that kind of humor can have a place. But... \*sob\* what do I do with... with freaking Rocket sauce? DON'T ANSWER THAT-

So team rocket bring out their pokemon and the twerps bring out their pokemon... \*yawn\*... and they fight the pinsir robot. I do like this gag with James, it was well done.

Oh look, a metal suit. I guess Pikachu really is called for now- he's using bulbasaur isn't he. Yep.

Okay well THEN pikachu uses thunderbolt, but unfortunately it's one of those electricity absorbing mechs that you wonder why team rocket don't use all the time, James sounds like he reading his lines sitting down while playing on his phone-

Then Heracross comes in, distracts the mech in a really boring sumo match, misty suddenly likes heracross out of the blue-

"I thought you hate bug types!"

"I do, but in this case, I don't!"

"Care to elaborate?"

"No!"

the twerps steal the sap and then heracross finishes it off with a great big toss, the environment is instantly saved and oh look at that, the episode isn't even filler.

That... was the most tacked on catch I've ever seen in my life. There was even a cross dissolve between it. I could hear it clunk into place at the end. At least that means it's over, right? Oh, thank heavens.

## Thoughts

I'm sorry, I know it's the cheapest thing in the world to say, I know I should be better than this, but my youtuber blood and my Dad gland will not let it pass. I'm so sorry, but... sigh... Yeah, this episode "sucks".

Well it does! Despite it's neat premise and occasionally acceptable sight gag this just felt so... so half-baked that I couldn't enjoy it. It seemed like everyone involved was at 10% energy. The writing was dull, the animation was stilted, the dub was monotone and low-energy, and the pacing, fittingly I guess, was just so sticky and slow even the battles felt dull as ditchwater. Then almost as if to say "HA! Can't say it doesn't have value now!" they throw in a catch at the end, right AFTER the optimal time for him to be caught, like drinking a hot chocolate and realizing you left the marshmallow at the bottom and you can still eat it but it just wasn't the optimal time, you know?

Honestly I'm just clutching at sloppy metaphors at this point because there really isn't much more to say. The environmental message was pretty good, and actually less ham-handed than dig those diglett or the underground round up and this line in particular hit pretty hard...

But it's all just occasional channel-flickers in the white noise of the overall experience, not to mention the creepy-crawly creeper vibe really left a bad taste in my mouth. I can't bring myself to expend energy on it since it didn't seem to do so with me. It's not quite a rock due to its memorability and its educational value, however weak, so it gets a pokeball. A great example of how canon episodes aren't inherently better than filler and a real low point by one of my favorite writers. Now if you'll excuse me I'm going to have a glass of water and a cracker to spice up the mood...

## Trivia

Luckily, an episode doesn't need to be great to have interesting trivia, thank heavens. What stood out to me the most to begin with is that the rivalry between pinsir and heracross is actually a reference to the stag and rhinoceros beetles that reside in Japan. They're so ingrained into Japanese culture that samurai helmets were based on their distinctive horns and pincers, they also love sap to the point they get on each other's carapaces over the good spots and it's common for kids to have them as first pets. But the real connection is in the OTHER pastime the kids would engage in with the beetles... **BUG FIGHTING!**

Yeah, kids quite often set these two species of beetle on each other to see who would win, due to both of them being very aggressive and territorial, not to the death obviously but in a kind of ring out sumo match. In fact, I'm sure it's obvious by now but it was this very pastime that inspired pokemon's battle mechanics. Satoshi Tajiri loved bug collecting, trading and fighting, and he wanted to pass on that magic with Pokemon. So like I said, the premise of this episode is sound and even a little poignant, it's just too bad it landed like a Chloroformed Snorlax. Knowing all this it's kind of weird that Bug types sucked in the game for so long, huh? You'd think Tajiri would have made them overpowered!

Well, at least they got their own mega-evolutions in X and Y to reference this as well, and in the Sun and Moon anime they're mentioned as teaming up to fight Vikavolt, which is based on another kind of stag beetle with jagged pincers. It's just really cute to see that kind of thing referenced.

Moving on to the changes though, I do like this one where Jessie describes a foul pancake recipe that she's planning to sell with the sap.

If you have a passing knowledge of Japanese food you'll know what she's actually making is the Osaka specialty Okonomiyaki, a thick, savoury pancake with fish flakes on the top. I know that doesn't sound too appetising on the surface but it's AMAZING when done right, it's like an asian spin on a bacon pancake or a savoury crepe. There's a restaurant in Osaka where the best is apparently made and Jess (my spouse, business partner, editor and co-geek for those who don't know) got to go there! ... and was then immediately turned away because of the massive line and celebrities dining there. One day!

But anyway, ahem, no, in the original Japanese James and Meowth were talking about ACTUAL pancakes, and Jessie just talked about what her favorite style of western pancake would be and ends up accidentally describing okonomiyaki instead, hence their weirded out expressions. I think it was an okay edit, but it would have been nice to get a culture lesson as well.

And lastly, I know that this is going to sound super weird. But it's not often at all I can share this kind of bizarre knowledge that's in my head, so here we go... Woodruff has the same facial hair as Wilford Woodruff, the terrifying-looking 4th leader of the LDS church (Mormons). I mean, MAYBE there was an LDS guy working at 4Kids, but more likely they just chose a name with wood in it and it's just a big coincidence.

...

LOOK HOW OFTEN DO YOU GET TO SHOW OFF YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF MORMON LEADERS ALL RIGHT? There was also this guy called Porter Rockwell who'd fend off angry mobs by dual wielding sawn off shotguns on horseback and sorry, sorry, shutting up-

Patrons

And so, Suede Drags himself along the trail, his legs heavy with disappointment and tree sap. Maybe the next episode will help get him moving again, or maybe it'll just send him on a roll of bad episodes...